



Virginia-Highland VOICE

Volume 4, No. 3

A publication of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association

August, 2000

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association (VHCA) will be held on Wednesday, **September 6 at 7:30 p.m.** in the Inman Middle School auditorium at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Park Drive. The agenda includes election of directors for the 2000-2001 term, proposed amendments to the VHCA Bylaws, VHCA community donations and annual awards. We have invited city and state representatives to attend and look forward to seeing you there!

The proposed bylaw amendments have been approved by the VHCA Board subject to approval at the annual meeting. A copy of the proposed amendments is available on the VHCA website at www.vahi.org. The proposed amendments would:

- change the beginning of the fiscal year of the VHCA from October 1 to January 1
- increase from \$200 to \$1,000 the size of check that would require two signatures
- revise the minimum vote required to amend the Bylaws to conform to Georgia law
- permit the Board to designate a location other than the Ponce Library for storage of VHCA records
- permit notices to Board members to be sent via email
- permit alternate directors to attend Board meetings and participate (but not vote) in Board discussions
- provide for the manner in which Board members may resign from the Board
- conform the procedures for electing directors to previous Bylaw amendments
- correct typographical errors and reflect name changes

The VHCA Board recommends approval of these proposed amendments. All residents of Virginia-Highland over the age of 18 are eligible to vote and we encourage you to attend the meeting.

2000-2001 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE BEGINS AT ANNUAL MEETING!

Become a dues-paying member of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association now! We are accepting memberships for the 2000-2001 year to coincide with the annual meeting. Dues are only \$10 a year and your donation goes toward the betterment of your community, including neighborhood planning and zoning, public safety and more! Add \$5 to your membership to help in the beautification of our neighborhood, supporting tree and parks efforts.

The neighborhood needs your support and it couldn't be easier. Using the envelope provided, send the enclosed application form and your check made payable to the Virginia-Highland Civic Association to P.O. Box 8401, Atlanta, GA 31106.

Don't procrastinate. Join today!

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

The focus of crime in our neighborhood is shifting from larceny to serious one-on-one robberies. There have been over a dozen incidents of this kind since the first of the year. These crimes are unavoidable for the victims and demonstrate the reality of life in a big city and in a popular neighborhood. The police are trying to break the cases of the "White pickup truck/hatchback gang", the most daring of all the perpetrators. They continue to rob people in the Virginia-Highland Ave vicinity, with forays onto Adair off North Highland. A special police patrol was introduced in July by the VHCA Board of Directors. This off-duty APD officer patrols the North Highland corridor and one block east and west of North Highland, between St. Charles and Los Angeles Avenues. Very quickly, a man was caught breaking into cars on Frederica Avenue. In late July, a man was caught in a home on Lanier Blvd. after breaking into it while it was occupied.

I believe there is only so much you can do to avoid becoming a crime statistic, but meanwhile you and your neighbors are among the best deterrents. If you don't know your neighbors, now is a good time to correct that situation. Sharing information about your work habits, your comings and goings, will make it more difficult for a stranger to cause havoc with your sense of security. And, your home security system is effective only when it's "ON".

Several pedestrian crosswalks have been upgraded and the striping has been enhanced. Not enough, in my opinion, but it's a start. PEDS, a pedestrian rights support group, is aggressively searching for the special crosswalk traffic cones I mentioned previously. Samples have been found. After the state DOT gives its approval, we'll pursue putting them along North Highland Avenue.

In the mean time, many people continue to jaywalk and put themselves in harm's way as the speeding continues on that main street. In particular, I have observed numerous adults jaywalking while pushing strollers. Talking to them, and asking them to cross only at crosswalks could bring a less-than-expected response. Hopefully, the message will sink in and people will become more safety conscious.

Aaron Gross, Chair

BELL SOUTH ASSISTS NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS

Bellsouth is offering neighborhood watch programs two free cell phones that can be used only to call either 911 or the Zone 6 precinct to report suspicious activity or suspected crime. The representative in charge of this service is Julia Russo at 404-713-4230. If your watch program is interested, give her a call for further details.

TREE NEWS

August 15: Relief for the Trees?

On August 15, Senior Arborist Frank Mobley and four more new city arborists will begin to implement some new provisions of Atlanta's Tree Ordinance. The new provisions were suggested by the Tree Conservation Commission and were passed overwhelmingly by the City Council in the spring. Our City Council member, Cathy Woolard, played a major role in helping steer these changes through City Council.

Starting August 15, to remove any tree 6 inches in diameter or larger you must request a Notice of Preliminary Approval documenting the tree(s) that you wish to remove. If after review the arborist grants the Preliminary Approval, a sign will be posted on the property where the construction and/or tree removal will take place. Each tree will be painted at ground level and at breast height. Any person who wishes can review the decision of the arborist to allow the tree cutting and can appeal to the Tree Commission within 15 days of the first day of posting. Until the Tree Commission makes a decision, no trees can be cut. If there is no appeal within 15 days and the trees are being removed for construction purposes, a building permit will be issued and the trees can be cut.

The new provisions are in response to tremendous pressure from city neighborhoods to stop illegal tree cutting and to force developers to consider the existing trees in their design of new projects. The provisions may, perhaps, slow the building boom. They will also give us more time to think about the value of trees, from producing the oxygen we need to cleaning the air we breathe to holding the soil in place to shading our homes to ... and they are beautiful and often awe inspiring as well.

Coming — Trees in Parking Lots?

In a strongly worded letter to Norman Koplan, Bureau of Buildings Director, Jay Lowery, Director of Parks, and Frank Mobley, Senior Arborist, the Virginia-Highland Civic Association asked that the parking lot requirements of the City Tree Ordinance be implemented in the neighborhood. Briefly, the ordinance states that every parking lot of 30 or more spaces must have one shade tree per eight parking spaces, a five-foot landscape strip between the parking lot and a sidewalk, and barrier curbs to protect the vegetation and pedestrians.

Specifically citing the street tree damage at St. Charles and Highland Avenue from cars driving over the sidewalk, the letter asks for enforcement of the law. Let's hope that the city's expanded arborist staff will begin to implement the law, on the books since 1992. We need safe and "green" parking lots.

First Atlanta Tree Sale — October 14

Trees Atlanta is having the first tree sale in Atlanta, Saturday, October 14 from 9-4 in Piedmont Park. Although the focus will be on native trees, over 100 species will be available. If you have been searching for a special tree, come to this sale. Big Leaf Magnolia, Chalk bark maple, seven varieties of oak, pawpaw and sassafras are a few of the trees on sale. All proceeds will go to further Trees Atlanta's neighborhood tree planting. Come to look as well as to buy. It will be a great opportunity to practice your tree identification skills. Bring the children.

Neighborhood Fall Planting

I have begun to plan for fall and winter tree planting. Below are the tree planting projects being planned:

1. Atkins Park has requested 14 maple trees.
2. Replace street trees that did not survive the drought.
3. Tree planting along Amsterdam — a joint project with Morningside Civic Association and Trees Atlanta.

Call me if you want a tree in the green space in front of your house, or if you want to help plant. Call also if you want a shade tree in your yard. We may be able to reimburse the cost of the tree.

Stephanie Coffin
Parks Committee Co-Chair (404) 874-0523

VIRGINIA-HIGHLAND SUMMERFEST 2000

Once again, the Virginia-Highland neighborhood was visited by throngs of people coming to "The Best Neighborhood Festival" (Creative Loafing). They were not disappointed. The Artists Market was a site of very active participation as arts and crafts of all kinds were purchased by locals and visitors alike. The 5K Fun Run was capped at 850 runners and was a sellout, three days before the race. The Tot-Trot had another large turnout of nearly 300 kids and some arrived too late to participate. KidsFest was a hit with new leadership and new activities for children. Across the street from KidsFest, older "kids" participated in the rock climbing wall and the giant "Sinking Titanic" slide. Music in the meadow entertained the crowds both days, and dancing broke loose during the Cajun band's turn. There was also excellent blues and rock. After initial sound volume "adjustments", the music settled down, as did everyone else. Rain dampened the spirits and plans of many people and the crowds were smaller on Sunday, but still a good crowd by all accounts.

Unfortunately, two incidents marred this festival. The first was the result of our neighborhood's aging infrastructure — a sewer overflow that caused a great deal of concern and discomfort until the "Sewer Crew" (Ben Barkley, Steve Kushner, and yours truly) removed the debris. A city crew finally arrived to relieve the situation. I recalled that it was the explosion of a transformer near the food vendors that caused similar but not as smelly concerns in '99. In addition, one of our beloved neighbors Liz Couch was injured when a large umbrella stand tipped over and struck her. We all got quite a scare when this happened, but we were fortunate to have medical personnel there immediately. Liz continues to recover and we wish her a speedy return to full health.

All in all, the festival was successful, in spite of rain, sewer problems, and the injury. Financially, we netted approximately \$56,000 dollars — once again making it possible to continue the civic association's grant programs and other neighborhood enhancing activities. When you see them, please thank the following subcommittee chairs for the excellent, dedicated work they and their volunteers did:

John Askew - Cash Management
Kathy Barkley - Artists Market
Chris Clark - Security
Jill Gossett - Volunteers
Lou Hertz - Logo Merchandise
Jean Jordan - Volunteers
Steve Kushner - Asst to Gen. Chair
Dina Moore - KidsFest
Susan Kraham - Hotline
Tom Penn-David - Beermeister
Pierce Pape - Fun Runs
Wiley Sommerville - Treasurer
Randie Siegel - Logistics
Barb Touchette-Wills - Marketing

Several hundred other volunteers made Summerfest successful. Many wear their T-shirts with pride, and rightly so. If you see one, give 'em a pat on the back and an "Attaboys/girl". They deserve it. It was a pleasure working with this group again.

Needless to say, a big "Thank You" goes to our neighbors along the festival site, on Virginia Avenue and its side streets. Thanks also go out to the many visitors who ate, drank, ran, lounged, bought art, and behaved in an exemplary manner.

Aaron Gross, General Chair

ON PACES ON PONCE

Paces Properties revealed its development plan for the "highway land" at 830 Ponce de Leon at the May 1 Civic Association planning committee meeting. The 1.7 acre parcel was the last piece of DOT land sold under the agreement reached in the 20-year long CAUTION v. DOT battle that created both Freedom Parkway and Freedom Park. CAUTION was the umbrella neighborhood group that stopped the DOT's planned Stone Mountain Freeway at Moreland Avenue and created the largest park in the city.

Paces proposed a four-story, 52-unit condo development to be called Paces on Ponce. The development would feature underground parking for residents, supplemented by 42 surface parking spaces. It included such amenities as breezeways and a large swimming pool. What it did not include were the specimen and perhaps historic trees on the property - in excess of 900 diameter inches of mature hardwoods were eliminated in the plan. Paces Properties proposed to either pave or build structures on nearly every square inch available under the zoning law, eliminating almost all of the existing vegetation. Five trees at the extreme edges were to be saved.

At the May 1 meeting, the planning committee pointed out that the agreement signed in 1992 by CAUTION, the DOT and the City of Atlanta stipulated that "approximately 4.4 acres on the north side of Ponce de Leon Avenue in the vicinity of Barnett Street will be disposed of by sale and shall be used in a manner agreed to by the City and the Virginia-Highland Civic Association." The committee asked Paces Properties to modify its plan. Using a tree survey prepared for the Civic Association by Arboguard, Paces Properties was asked to devise a plan that would preserve 14 trees located at the edges of the property.

At the next meeting on May 10, Paces Property presented a plan that retained the entire built environment originally proposed, but with more "save" trees. The problem, however, was that Paces simply drew in trees to be "saved" without regard for either tree biology or accepted arboriculture practices and standards. For example, to "save" one large oak ten feet from a proposed building, Paces would not only have to destroy the tree's root structure but also remove its main leader and two large branches that extend about 45 feet from the trunk. In reality, and then only with extreme luck, the "new" plan would save two additional trees.

At the Civic Association's request, Councilperson Cathy Woolard set up a meeting between the city, Paces Properties, and the neighborhood to seek agreement. The city's representative, Bureau of Buildings Director Norman Koplan, did not attend the meeting, so the city administration was not represented.

At the meeting Woolard raised questions relating to traffic flow that the neighborhood had not addressed. Paces on Ponce proposed a driveway 50 feet west of the traffic light at Ponce de Leon and the

Freedom Parkway. Woolard questioned the safety of this plan and requested a 30-day moratorium for consideration by the DOT. Paces Property responded to this request by stating that it would refuse any further negotiations with the neighborhood.

At the next executive board meeting, the Civic Association voted to file suit against both Paces Properties and the DOT. The Civic Association asked for a preliminary injunction through our attorney Michael Bowers. We asked the Court to uphold the 1992 Consent Order between CAUTION and the DOT that calls for the city, the neighborhood, and any future developer to work out a "housing plan" for the property. On Friday, August 4, Superior Court Judge Elizabeth Long denied our request for an injunction.

In the meantime, through constant pressure at the Bureau of Buildings, Paces Properties acquired the necessary approval of city arborist Frank Mobley. Apparently based on Paces Property's promise to hire an arboricultural consultant, Mobley stamped the plan with its highly suspect and biologically unlikely "tree save" areas. It seemed likely that Bureau of Buildings Director Koplan would soon issue a building permit for this controversial project. Most recently, however, on August 9th, the Georgia Supreme Court issued a stay pending resolution of the appeal of the lawsuit concerning this property. The appeal could take up to a year to resolve and no activity may occur on the property as a result of the stay.

The neighborhood stands to lose almost all of the 48 large and healthy trees on this property, including three giant red oaks and some very large water oaks. The Civic Association contends that many of these trees can be saved in the context of a significant housing development. However, the developer must agree to a smaller building footprint and adjust the plans to consider the survival needs of the trees.

The property in question faces the Ponce de Leon gateway to Freedom Park and the Freedom Parkway. Next time you approach Ponce on the Parkway, imagine the property clearcut, the trees replaced with just another imposing building advertising Paces Property. This project might blend with similar developments on Peachtree Road or in Sandy Springs, but it is highly inconsistent with the "city in a forest" character of the in-town Virginia-Highland neighborhood.

The struggle for this land initiated by CAUTION many years ago is not over. To get involved, go see the property and assess the trees. Then call Mayor Bill Campbell (404 330-6100), Planning and Development Commissioner Michael Dobbins (404 330-6070), and Bureau of Buildings Director Norman Koplan (404 330-6152) to express your concern. Councilperson Woolard is supportive of the Civic Association's efforts concerning this property so there is no need to call her office.

Stephanie Coffin

**Call Ruthie the Realtor
for Residential Real Estate Sales
Ruthie Penn-David**



**(404) 875-2942
home office
(404) 233-5347 Box 400
voice mail
RE/MAX of Buckhead**

Each office independently owned & operated

**Atlanta's Best
Hardware & Garden is
Right On The Corner**
No lines • No waiting • No hassles



**INTOWN
Hardware
and Garden Center**

INTOWN HARDWARE & GARDEN (404) 874-5619

854 N. HIGHLAND AVE. MON-FRI: 9-5 SAT: 9-6 SUN: 11-6

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Don't forget the VHCA Annual Meeting: Wednesday, September 6, 2000, at 7:30 pm, in the auditorium of Inman Middle School at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Park Drive. Please arrive a few minutes early to check-in. We hope to have an exceptional turnout so mark your calendars and plan to attend.

As another VHCA year's cycle comes to a close, I have been thinking about how busy we all are and how much has been accomplished over the past year. Starting with the successful opposition of an alcohol license application for a large proposed nightclub in the middle of our neighborhood, our application to the National Register, the formation of the new Parenting & Education Committee, quarterly issues of the VOICE, another Summerfest, a new website, a plethora of Planning applications, a trial off-duty patrol program for N. Highland, tree plantings, and all the day to day business of running the VHCA. It has been a very, very busy year.

When you see VHCA board members, committee chairs, and Summerfest committee members around the neighborhood, please thank them for the time and effort they contribute to our neighborhood. It wouldn't be the same community without them, and it is rarely easy work.

We'll see you at the annual meeting!

Ruthie Penn-David

Don't Sell Your Home!

Why dispose of an excellent investment?

We make property management painless and profitable by supervising all details professionally and responsively.

PROPERTY
consultants

Your Real Estate Investment can be:

Protected Profitable Problem Free

Gary S. Chad (404) 874-6357



a clean house.com
the environmentally-safe house cleaning service

To request a quote visit us on the Internet or call
770.447.6464



Licensed Bonded Insured

Visit www.ImproveNet.com

- Find Reliable Contractors
- Get Expert Advice
- Discover New Products
- Estimate your Costs

And it's all FREE

ImproveNet®
www.ImproveNet.com

Home Improvement Help...Every Step of the Way

ON-LINE ACCESS IS HERE!

The Civic Association has a website:

www.vahi.org



To increase
your home's resale value,
we suggest an effective lawn
ornament such as this.

**Sandy D'Aprile Re/max
Greater Atlanta In Town**

Our resident expert, serving our neighborhood real estate needs since 1983. Nobody knows us better. Nobody cares more.

404.872-5525 or 404.609-9898